

Rt Hon Rachel Reeves  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
Via email only  
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**Enquiries to:** Richard Millard  
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**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Dear Ms. Reeves,

### **Business rates open letter**

This month, many businesses across East Hampshire will open their rates bills to discover they have spiked by as much as 30%.

From 1 April, the Government's updated rateable values will come into force, and the resultant rises will come as a body blow for many businesses already struggling to keep their head above water.

Already our businesses face soaring costs and market uncertainty – now they are expected to absorb hikes in business rates that could have potentially crippling consequences.

The scale of these increases is deeply troubling and, in their current form, represents an unacceptable burden on local businesses and the wider economy.

Compounding this issue is the scheduled end of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief on 31 March 2026, which has been essential for a wide range of local businesses still recovering from recent economic pressures.

These increases come at the worst possible time.

Under the new arrangements, some businesses will see an increase of £800 or 5%, 15% or even 30%, depending on their new rateable value.

In East Hampshire, 183 businesses fall into that highest bracket.

We recognise that transitional relief and supporting small business relief will help some organisations adjust. However, these schemes will be too few and too scanty to offset the scale of the increases many will face.

Local authorities such as ours are responsible for issuing business rate bills, but we do not set the rates themselves. We are therefore deeply concerned that the combined impact of

the revaluation and the phasing-out of key reliefs will place many otherwise viable businesses under significant financial strain.

A strong and resilient local economy depends on businesses being able to plan, invest and operate with confidence. Without further intervention, these rate increases may undermine that stability at a critical time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R Millard', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Richard Millard  
**Leader of East Hampshire District Council**

cc. Dan Tomlinson, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury; Alison McGovern, Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government